

ON THE PISCO TRAIL DESTINATION NASHVILLE GRAPE COCKTAILS WOOD-ROASTED COFFEE

imbibe

LIQUID CULTURE

The
UNITED
STATES
of
BEER



**Your State-by-State
Guide to American
Craft Beer**

Find out why we love
this Indiana wheat ale
on page 42!

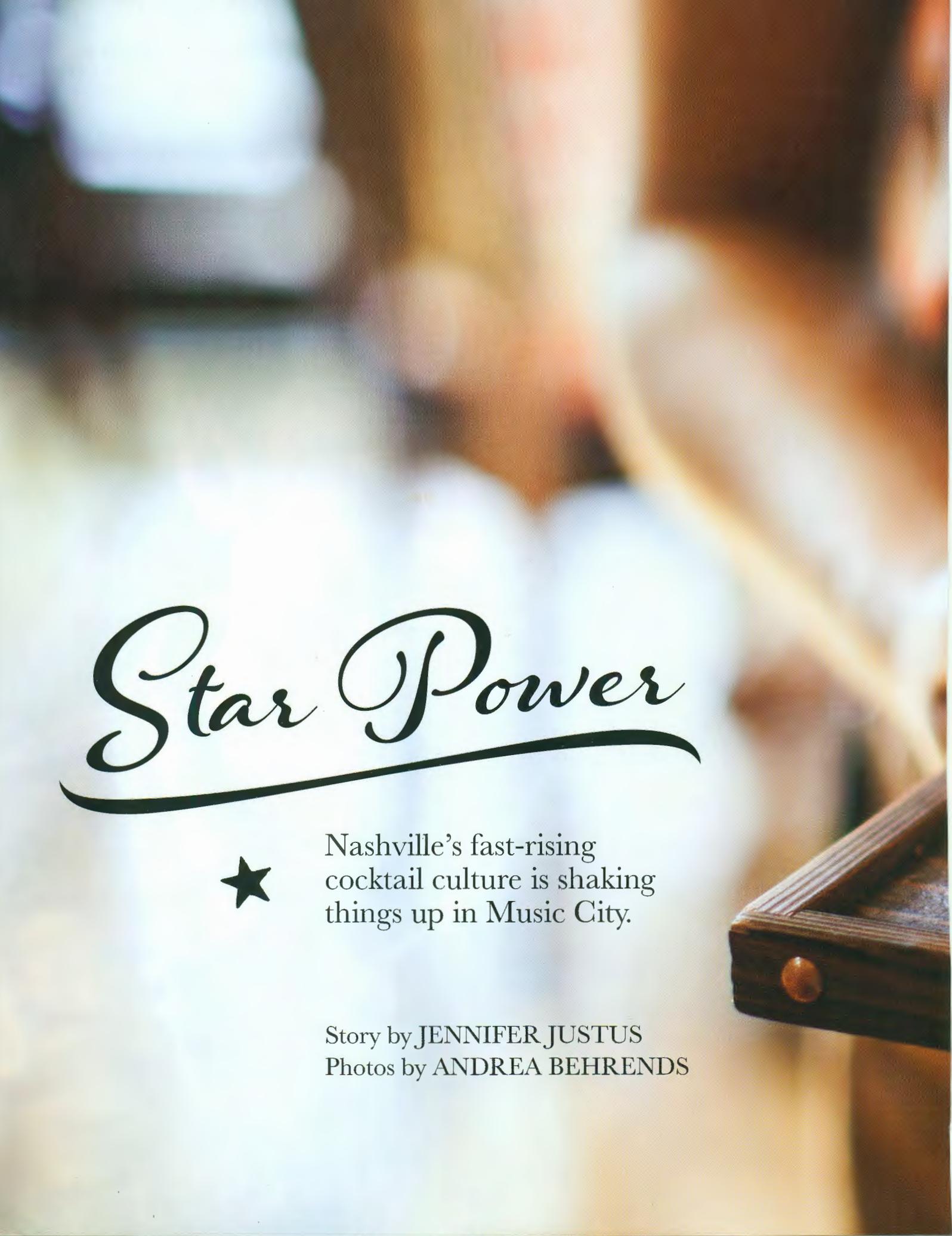


ISSUE 45 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2013
IMBIBEMAGAZINE.COM

\$4.95 US/\$5.95 CAN



0 56698 04199 3



Star Power



Nashville's fast-rising cocktail culture is shaking things up in Music City.

Story by JENNIFER JUSTUS
Photos by ANDREA BEHRENDIS

*A*s Nashville continues to boom, stories about the city's burgeoning food and drinks scene often start with a dramatic show of surprise. But that reaction tends to rile up locals. Nashvillians know that just like the city's music scene, that transformation has been a while in the making.

You'll still find a love for beer with classic country in this place wedged between the birthplace of Tennessee whiskey to the South, bourbon country to the North and the Appalachian traditions of moonshine in the hills nearby. But Nashville's cocktail culture also embodies the city's creativity, its spirit of artistic collaboration and a supportive vibe enhanced by a growing restaurant scene. Nashville loves celebrating both its high and low cultures. Ask for restaurant recommendations, for example, and you'll be pointed to hot chicken joints and Arnold's Country Kitchen in the same breath as the nationally recognized tasting menu at The Catbird Seat. It's a diversity rooted in older establishments and demonstrated at new bars and restaurants, such as the Music City Tippler, the first offshoot of The Tippler in New York City, which opened in Nashville this summer. The Music City menu includes carefully crafted cocktails made with local, organic fruits and herbs alongside cans of PBR in brown paper bags.

For a short history lesson in cocktails, though, start with Benjamin Goldberg. "It's been a life change," he says of the past several years. Ten years ago at age 23, Goldberg opened Bar Twenty3. Voted by a local newspaper as the "Bar That Makes You Feel Like You Are Not In Nashville," it mixed a sleek interior with plenty of Red Bull and vodka. But over the next few years, Goldberg's tastes and interests evolved, and by 2009 he had opened a honky tonk called Paradise Park Trailer Resort, as well as The Patterson House, an acclaimed bar that helped kick-start the cocktail renaissance in Nashville.

Inspired by The Violet Hour in Chicago, Goldberg's Patterson House invited guests behind a thick velvet curtain into a lush haven of textures, dripping chandeliers and bottles of housemade bitters. It introduced Nashville to the concept of being seated at a bar with bartenders carefully crafting drinks and enjoying the company of their guests. Goldberg opened the spot with his brother Max, and he pulled in cocktail consultant Toby Maloney, creator of The Violet Hour, as well as chef Josh Habiger, who had worked with Grant Achatz and would later open Goldberg's The Catbird Seat in 2011.

At the time, Matt Tocco, who helped open The Patterson House, says it "knocked people out of their comfort zone. They were like, 'All right, I'm along for the ride at this point.'"

The Patterson House continues to serve as one of the best options for cocktails with its careful and creative construction of classics and more locally flavored options like the Bacon Old Fashioned—Four Roses infused with Benton's bacon drippings, maple syrup, coffee-pecan bitters and an orange peel garnish.

As Goldberg acknowledges, the restaurant scene has helped push the cocktail culture even further. "We have a lot more



Black Dog Sour

A corn whiskey from the neighboring state of Kentucky was the inspiration for this twist on a Whiskey Sour.

2 oz. corn whiskey (Tocco uses MBR Black Dog)
1/8 oz. Pernod pastis
3/4 oz. fresh lime juice
3/4 oz. simple syrup (1:1)
1 fresh egg white (pasteurized if you like)

Tools: shaker, strainer
Glass: tumbler
Garnish: 3–4 drops Angostura bitters

Combine all ingredients in a shaker and shake without ice. Add ice and shake vigorously until chilled. Strain into a tumbler and garnish.

Matt Tocco, Rolf and Daughters





Andy's Parler

This cocktail is named for Andy Mumma, who owns the beloved East Nashville coffee shop Barista Parlor. Bartenders at Husk use Mumma's cold-brew in this deliciously earthy cocktail. "It's really important to us to have relationships with our fellow artisans and help introduce our guests to them as well," says Husk general manager Dan Latimer.

2 oz. aged rum
½ oz. cold-brewed coffee
¾ oz. fresh grapefruit juice
½ oz. cane syrup
3 dashes Angostura bitters

Tools: shaker, strainer

Glass: coupe

Garnish: grapefruit peel, expressed and discarded

Combine all ingredients in a shaker and shake with ice to chill. Strain into a chilled coupe and express and discard the grapefruit peel.

Mike Wolf, Husk Nashville



independently owned restaurants that can do exactly what they want to do and not spread themselves too thin," he says.

Tocco has also been a big part of that change. With a degree in psychology and philosophy, he started at The Patterson House with no knowledge of cocktails. "Originally I just wanted to barback there," he says. To his benefit, Tocco had no bad habits to break when he learned to make cocktails—just an upbringing with a "DIY Dad" who believed in no shortcuts, he says. "You do things the right way."

After three years at The Patterson House, Tocco left to become the beverage director at Rolf and Daughters—a stylish restaurant in Germantown's historic 100-year-old Werthan Factory. There you'll find him complementing the locally sourced "modern peasant fare" with drinks that nod to Nashville's heritage and focus on regional products, such as his Black Dog Sour (recipe on page 77), made with MB Roland Kentucky Black Moonshine, Pernod, lime juice, egg white and Angostura bitters.

Ask Tocco or Goldberg where else they like to drink cocktails in town, and you won't get cagey answers or a sense of competition. Collaboration and openness in supporting new restaurants, products, ideas and art is a big part of what helps Nashville's food and drinks thrive. "I say all the time that Nashville is the supportive city," says Goldberg. "People want you to succeed. It's a really accepting culture, so people will push the limits in such a positive way. It just frees people up to be more comfortable and take more risks."

Goldberg cites the creativity even outside food and drink as a driving force. "It's been this huge birth in the past few years. All different trades and people are committed to high-quality products," he says, citing the work of Nashville shoe designer Peter Nappi and custom denim brand Imogene + Willie—which outfit the bartenders at Husk Nashville—and furniture maker Holler Design, whose work can also be found at the restaurant. "You walk into a restaurant and it's not just a local restaurant—everything [in it] is local."

Opening Act

City House, a rustic Italian restaurant with a solid Southern backbone, opened about a year before The Patterson House, and it remains a favorite spot for food and cocktails. Stephanie Melidis-Wilson, who helmed the bar for the past several years (before having a baby recently with husband and City House chef/owner Tandy Wilson), says that just as Nashville's cocktail establishments have collectively raised the bar for service and sophistication, so too have they helped bring in better ingredients. "When I started out pairing cocktails with food, it was a hard job," she recalls. "Now with all the spirits that are available to us—and the spirits people are making—it's not a stretch to make sophisticated cocktails to complement meals."

In 2009, state laws in Tennessee were updated to allow distilling in counties that also serve alcoholic drinks. That paved the way for new distilleries like Collier and McKeel—which makes a traditional, charcoal-filtered Tennessee whiskey that's also used in Whisper Creek Tennessee Sipping Cream, an all-natural cream and whiskey blend developed with local star chef Deb Paquette—and Corsair, Nashville's first craft distillery, whose Triple Smoke whiskey can be found on the shelf at bars like City House, and whose tasting room has become a cocktail destination of its own serving drinks made with syrups from Nashville's Bang Candy Company.

Wilson has been known to pull from family recipes and even old Junior League cookbooks for his inventive and soulful food menu, an attitude mirrored at the bar. The Henry, for example, brings together Corsair Triple Smoke whiskey with Maurin Quina, Cynar, Angostura bitters and a flamed orange peel. The Junior is named for Junior Johnson, the NASCAR legend who got his start running moonshine. Melidis-Wilson collaborated with her husband to bring together locally made Prichard's Lincoln County Lightning white whiskey with crème de violette, a squeeze of lemon juice and Dr. Enuf, a local lemon-lime soda. Bottled in East Tennessee since 1949, Dr. Enuf helps cut the harshness of the white whiskey. "We just want fun—fun and quality cocktails," says Melidis-Wilson. "There's nothing uptight about it."

That's a sentiment you'll find throughout Music City restaurants. Even at the well-heeled Holland House Bar and Refuge, which became an instant classic when it opened in East Nashville in 2010, denim-clad locals can stool up alongside the business set for a Yuengling Lager or a simple mixed drink like the Warsaw Mule, made with Polish vodka. And at Husk Nashville, one of the newest and most highly anticipated spots, bartender Shannon Wright agrees that cocktails shouldn't be about outsmarting one another or the customer. "At the end of the day, you're wanting people to drink your drinks," she says.

Led by James Beard Award-winning chef Sean Brock (who worked previously at Nashville's The Hermitage Hotel), Husk Nashville (a sister restaurant to Charleston, South Carolina's acclaimed spot of the same name) has a hyper-local focus. That includes Cheerwine soda as much as it does heirloom vegetables and herbs like lovage, which Wright uses in a salt for drinks. "You should see our walk-in cooler," she says. "It's like Alice in Wonderland."

Husk doesn't use exotic ingredients for novelty's sake, though. It's more about making good use of what grows in an area to tap into the true roots of a place. When the restaurant opened, Brock told stories about foraging for pokeweed along the side of the road, and he asked his team to bring in vegetables and fruits from their own yards. "I have a huge honeysuckle tree, so let's do something with that," Wright remembers saying. "My dad has a chestnut tree, so in the fall we'll do something with that. I know at Husk I wouldn't do anything with pineapple juice, because where do pineapples grow here?"

She adds that the bartenders also draw on the knowledge of chefs as often as possible. "When they're pickling peaches, we'll use that liquid," she says. "That's a different way to get acid into a drink."

Rising Star

But if there's any place in Nashville that speaks to the laid-back, fun-loving feel of the city—as well as residents' love for the high and low culture of this place—it's No. 308.

Located off a scraggly, up-and-coming stretch in East Nashville, 308's crowd on a recent Wednesday included a polished couple in their 40s unwinding after work and some shaggy-haired, wiry guys who looked like they'd just rolled out of bed. Heath Haynes, a local musician who plays with Wanda Jackson in between gigs at honky tonks, was spinning punk and rock and roll on vinyl.

One thing you won't hear at 308? The word mixologist. Don't even call it a cocktail bar. The owners come from backgrounds in Miami and New York City where they've not only slung drinks at



Sam Malone

The Cheers bartender this bourbon-based sipper is named for wasn't a drinker but, says Nashville bartender Ben Clemons, "[I] came up with the drink while watching season 3 episode 1 when Sam is off the wagon. [It] just seemed fitting."

1½ oz. bourbon
1½ oz. Cocchi Americano Rosa
vermouth
½ oz. Cherry Heering

Tools: mixing glass, barspoon, strainer
Glass: rocks
Garnish: lemon peel (flame it if
you like)

Combine ingredients in a mixing glass and stir with ice to chill. Strain into a rocks glass over fresh ice and garnish.

Ben Clemons, No. 308



Where to Go

The Catbird Seat

1711 Division St.
615-810-8200
thecatbirdseatrestaurant.com

City House

1222 Fourth Ave. N.
615-736-5838
cityhousenashville.com

Corsair Artisan Distillery and Taproom

1200 Clinton St.
615-200-0320
corsairartisan.com

Gray's on Main

332 Main St.
Franklin, TN
615-599-0409
graysonmain.com

Holland House Bar and Refuge

935 W. Eastland Ave.
615-262-4190
hollandhousebarandrefuge.com

Husk Nashville

37 Rutledge St.
615-256-6565
husknashville.com

Music City Tippler

1922 Adelia St.
615-329-1329
musiccitytippler.com

No. 308

407 Gallatin Ave.
615-650-7344
bar308.com

The Patterson House

1711 Division St.
615-636-7724
thepattersonnashville.com

Rolf and Daughters

700 Taylor St.
615-866-9897
rolfanddaughters.com



high-volume clubs but have also been educated on serious cocktail construction. They're as comfortable serving a stirred cocktail like the Barbarella made with rye, housemade limoncello and cherry liqueur, and Dolin blanc vermouth as they are pouring a simple shot of tequila with a cinnamon-orange chaser. "I think that might be the reason we have such a diverse crowd," says co-owner Alexis Soler. "You come here and we have a very nice shelf and selection, but we're just a bunch of kids bartending. But you talk to us, and we help you understand what we're about. I think that's why we have Brentwood moms coming here for parties and punk rock kids from Dino's [a dive bar next door]."

Soler, who's from Miami, and co-owner Ben Clemons of New York City, met at Tales of the Cocktail in 2009. "We came [to Nashville] with the idea of putting in an establishment that would have been progressive in either of those markets," she says. And despite their rock and roll appearances, it's easiest to understand their passion and heart by bringing up country music. "Coming from a place like Miami, I had no clue what country music was," Soler adds. "And now, I get emotional about it. I love it. It's so important. It's such a cool part of American history and this town."

It's that scrappy authenticity and openness that shines through in the menu and atmosphere at No. 308. A few strings of white bulbs add light to an otherwise dark, shotgun-shaped space with a long high bar and collection of retro-style furniture. Pages of books have been lacquered onto corner banquettes bringing a Beat-like feel that's matched by the bar's list of "writers block shots" named for Burroughs, Bukowski, Brautigan and others. A sign behind the bar announcing special events also sometimes reads: "Sorry about tomorrow."

Soler admits, though, that the transition to Nashville proved difficult at first. "If we were one step ahead of those major markets, we would be two or three steps ahead of the way drinking in this town was perceived," she says. "But being a utilitarian bar, a dive bar and cocktail bar at the same time, it allowed us the opportunity to kind of grab people by the hand and slowly walk them through things."

The bar opened in 2010, but Soler came to town a year earlier as an ambassador for St. Germain. "I remember when I moved here she was like, 'Careful. There's nothing here,'" Clemons recalls. "We'd put the phone calls out and grab this distributor's hand and this brand's hand and put them together and make them sit down and have a talk."

Soler says Nashville's selection of spirits has expanded by leaps and bounds as the cocktail programs in restaurants have stepped up their games. Clemons also loves that the dividing line between the higher-end cocktail bars and dive bars is being blurred. While dive bars used to turn up their noses at even having fresh juice, they now might have their own wall of bitters. "It's almost like stirring paint," he says. "You've got these two beautiful colors and at the beginning you still see such a wide separation between the two—this super-wide contrast—but they begin to come together and form something awesome."

And Soler has opinions about how Nashville needs to keep pushing the cocktail scene forward. She shows her Southern side in expressing her views with a "ya'll come" invitation—only in true 308 style. "People just need to come here and hang out with us for a night," she says. "Because they're gonna want to come back." ■

web extra  Get our guide to Nashville's best honky tonks: imbibemagazine.com/SO13